DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 396 EC 200 214

AUTHOR Kerlin, Sandra L.; And Others
TITLE An Employment Initiative to Hire Workers with Moderate/Severe Mental Retardation.
PUB DATE May 86
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association on Mental Deficiency (Denver, CO, May 25-28, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Employment Opportunities; *Moderate Mental Retardation; *On the Job Training; *Severe Mental Retardation; Sheltered Workshops; *Vocational Rehabilitation
IDENTIFIERS Ohio (Cincinnati); *Supported Work Programs

ABSTRACT

This project attempted to develop competitive employment opportunities for people with mental retardation with Greater Cincinnati (Ohio) businesses and industries. The Employment Initiatives Project was designed for persons with mental retardation, functioning in the moderate to severe range, who are located in either an adult work activity or sheltered workshop day program. After identifying working models, employers were contacted and asked to hire an individual for a competitive wage once he/she had demonstrated ability to perform successfully on the job (intensive on-site training was gradually phased out with the goal being full competitive employment). Among other models used were small work teams who performed a contracted service for an industry or a business which became the primary investor in a sheltered workshop. Identification of likely businesses was followed by development of an informational packet (initial contact), and an initial meeting with the business representatives. Key features of the program were the assurance that a qualified competent worker would be trained on the job, and that follow-up services would be available at no cost to the employer. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED284396

AN EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE TO HIRE WORKERS WITH MODERATE/SEVERE MENTAL RETARDATION

The purpose of this project was to develop employment opportunities for people with mental retardation with Greater Cincinnati businesses and industries. These people were working in sheltered worksites, and had not been given the opportunity for competitive employment. This initiative was different from traditional job placement, in that the emphasis was on developing project level placements. The projects could take the form of training programs leading to job placement for more than one individual. The projects proposed were from existing Projects with Industry (PWI); however, particular emphasis was placed on the flexibility to meet individual's needs.

Target Group

The Employment Initiative Project was designed for persons with mental retardation, functioning in the moderate to severe range, who are located in either an adult work activity or sheltered workshop day program. Some multiple handicapping conditions evidenced in the target population epilepsy, cerebral palsy, speech and language disorders, visual impairment, hearing impairment, autistic-like behaviors, emotional disturbance, and orthopedic impairments.

EC 200214

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sandra Kerbis
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Phase I

Working models were identified, in which persons with moderate/severe mental retardation had successful work experiences in competitive employment. An important factor considered was that any person with mental retardation, regardless of severity of handicapping condition, be considered for at least partial participation in competitive employment. The assumption that all individuals should be given the opportunity for competitive employment was primary to this project. The following four models were adapted from existing working models throughout the country, to insure the inclusion of as many potential workers as possible. The following four models were presented to business and industry, as those which have demonstrated successful placement for persons with handicapping conditions.

Voluntary Employment Leading to Paid Employment

The employer agrees to hire the individual for a competitive wage, once she has demonstrated ability to perform successfully in that job.

Supported Work

By identifying job sites, an individual is provided intensive on-job-training. Eventually, the trainer may be phased out, as the worker is better able to perform the duties of his job. The job coach or trainer may continue to provide some support, or be brought back in at a later date, if needed. Full competitive employment is the anticipated end result.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Enclave

Small work teams are developed to perform a contracted service for an industry. The length of time for the duration of the contract can range from temporary to permanent.

Industrial Sheltered

This model promotes a business becoming the primary investor in a sheltered workshop, rather than a social service agency being the primary investor. At the outset, the industry may invest in a very small part of the operation; the eventual goal is sole industrial ownership.

Phase II

There was recognition of the need to develop professional business contacts, to aid and assist the employment initiative while identifying and contacting potential businesses who might hire persons with MR. The local Chamber of Commerce, Local AFL-CIO Union Federation and the Cincinnati Business Committee were enlisted to provide technical support. Not only was their support solicited, but their advice on procedural matters was invaluable. The Cincinnati Business Committee was instrumental in the development of the packet of information, which was sent to companies interested in hiring.

Procedure

The Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce Directory of Business and Industry was cross-referenced with the Project with Industry directory, to identify those types of businesses which have been successfully implemented

in other parts of the country. A compendium of supportive documents was compiled by contacting successful projects in other parts of the country. Once this information was in place, identification of similar type industries in the Cincinnati area was made. For example, there is a successful project in Idaho with a plastics firm and a local workshop. Having obtained and copied the documents supporting the success of this project, contacts to over twenty-five plastics companies in the Greater Cincinnati area were made. However, contacts made were not exclusive to those projects which have already had proven success in other parts of the country.

Initial Contact

For the purpose of meeting the desired objectives of the employment initiative, letters of introduction were sent out to employers employing at least fifty, but preferably three hundred or more employees. Ten letters were sent initially to companies which met the desired objectives. A follow-up telephone call was made, to establish a time when a face-to-face meeting could be scheduled. When an appointment was made, a packet of information, further describing the initiative, was sent.

In order to approach the policy-making person within each perspective company, the letters were addressed to the executive levels. Since the companies were large, the most preferred person to contact was the Vice President in charge of Human Resources. If this person could not be identified, either the President of the company was contacted, or, in the larger companies, Vice Presidents of Administration. In many instances, the president or vice president would ask that the director of personnel be contacted by us. This was advantageous, in that the name of the executive involved was then used in our contact with the Personnel Director. Often, the executive and staff

from the personnel department met to discuss the initiative.

Packet of Information

A packet was developed, which was sent to interested employers who established an appointment. This packet was comprised of basic information about the employment initiative, along with brochures of the cooperating workshops. Pertinent information was included in the packet, e.g. information about the projects with plastics industries was sent to local plastic companies. The packet was also sent to companies who expressed interest, but did not want to commit to an appointment; follow-up phone calls were then made.

Initial Meeting

Four basic issues were discussed during the first meeting with representatives from business: 1) The competence of workers with MR, and their qualifications to fulfill the assigned duties of a particular job; 2) Assurance that on-the-job training would not end until the employer and the agency provider were satisfied that the employee could complete the duties assigned; also assurance that follow-up services, offered by the service provider at no cost to the employer, would be available, if needed; 3) The reliability of workers with MR, as compared to the non-handicapped worker; 4) Flexibility so that the project would work for the businessman and the service provider, to the benefit of the worker.

If there was interest in developing a project, another appointment was scheduled, or a follow-up telephone contact arranged before leaving the meeting. Depending on the interest level, the suggestion of submitting a proposal was made. The emphasis was placed on the project, rather than on individual job placement, at this stage of development.

The key feature in this process was the assurance that a qualified competent worker would be trained on the job, and follow-up services would be available at no cost to the employer. Explaining the incentives for hiring a worker with MR, coupled with these assurances, provided for a solid sales presentation. The packet of information that the employer was sent, prior to the meeting, enhanced the meetings. It is important that the employer be given the opportunity to read the same information being presented, prior to the meeting.

Sandra L. Kerlin, M.Ed.
Tom Fricke, M.Ed.
Beth Marcelain, B.A.
University Affiliated Cincinnati Center for Developmental Disorders
AAMD
May, 1986